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Recovery News

UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE INCLUDES SELF-EMPLOYED, OTHERS

January 9 is deadline to apply for wildfire recovery program

PASADENA, Calif. — The deadline for Southern California residents to apply for federally-funded Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is Wednesday, Jan. 9, 2008. The program is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and claims are processed through the California Employment Development Department (EDD).

All individuals—including self-employed—who are unemployed as a result of the October and November wildfires in the federally-declared California counties may be eligible for DUA. Weekly benefits range from \$144 to \$450. As of Dec. 27, 2007, more than 1,120 workers affected by the fires had been approved for disaster unemployment benefits. A total of 7,408 affected by the fires have filed for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits as a result of the fires.

“Wildfire recovery includes a number of programs,” said Mike Hall, federal coordinating officer with FEMA. “It’s important that we shine a bright light on Disaster Unemployment Assistance right now before the window of opportunity to enroll in this program closes next week.”

While DUA is similar to regular UI in benefit amounts and duration, DUA covers individuals who are not usually eligible for regular UI benefits. DUA may benefit individuals who are affected by the disaster and who have a legal right to work in the United States including those who:

- Were self-employed or were scheduled to begin self employment;
- Were unable to establish a valid regular UI claim;
- Have finished collecting their UI claim benefits;
- Were unable to reach work because of the disaster;
- Were scheduled to begin work that was terminated because of the fires;
- Were physically unable to work because of a disaster-incurred injury; or
- Became head of household and are seeking work because the former head of household died as a result of the disaster.

Residents can apply on-line at www.edd.ca.gov/fleclaim.htm or by calling **1-800-300-5616** for English; **1-800-326-8937** for Spanish; **1-800-547-3506** for Cantonese; **1-866-303-0706** for Mandarin; or TTY **1-800-815-9387**.

“It’s important that we reach out to those in need of Disaster Unemployment Assistance right now to make sure that all eligible workers have an opportunity to apply before the January 9 deadline,” said Patrick Henning, EDD director.

The counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura are eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance as well as other disaster recovery programs funded by FEMA and the State of California.

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FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.